



DECISION NOTICE AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
KENAI PENINSULA ZONE INVASIVE PLANT TREATMENT PROJECT
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
SEWARD AND GLACIER RANGER DISTRICTS
CHUGACH NATIONAL FOREST
ALASKA

DECISION

Based upon my review of the Kenai Peninsula Zone Invasive Plant Treatment Project Supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA), I have decided to implement the proposed action to modify the protocols for treatment of invasive plants on the Kenai Peninsula Zone of the Chugach National Forest so they are consistent with the more recently developed protocols for use on the Prince William Sound Zone. This will add five new herbicides (Triclopyr, Clopyralid, Sulfometuron Methyl, Imazapyr, and 2,4-D) to treatment options, remove self-imposed buffers and follow label direction instead, add the use of ATV/truck mounted sprayers, and allow the treatment of areas greater than one acre.

DECISION RATIONALE

The Kenai Peninsula Invasive Plant Treatment Project began in May 2014 with approval to eradicate, control, or contain non-native invasive plants within the Chugach National Forest on the Kenai Peninsula Zone (KPZ). Since then, more non-native invasive plant infestations have been found yearly, some have spread and others have been contained or eradicated. Changed conditions and new information support having greater flexibility in treatment options than were originally analyzed and it is more practical to have a unified approach to invasive plant management across the Forest. The purpose and need for this project is the same as it was for the 2014 project: to reduce the extent of specific invasive plant infestations, provide a mechanism to allow rapid response to newly emerging invasive plant infestations and to help protect uninfested areas from future introduction and spread of invasive plants. This project adds tools that were already analyzed for the Prince William Sound zone into the toolbox for KPZ.

The Kenai Peninsula Zone Invasive Plant Treatment Project Supplemental EA documents the environmental analysis and conclusions upon which this decision is based. The original (2014) KPZ Invasive Plant Treatment Project EA and decision and the 2017 Prince William Sound Zone Invasive Plant Treatment Project EA contain additional relevant analysis and are incorporated by reference.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Chugach National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions and updated periodically during the analysis. People were invited to review and comment on the proposal through email and published news release. Those who responded to the original May 2014 EA were notified in addition to other agencies and groups interested in invasive plant management on the Kenai Peninsula. The supplemental EA lists agencies and people consulted on page 4. After a 30-day comment period beginning March 12, 2020, one supportive comment was received.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The significance of environmental impacts must be considered in terms of context and intensity. This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human and national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. In the case of a site-specific action, significance usually depends upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Intensity refers to the severity or degree of impact (40 CFR 1508.27).

CONTEXT

The context of this action is limited. Instituting the proposed changes to the 2014 Kenai Peninsula Invasive Plant Treatment Project will not significantly change direct, indirect or cumulative effects since annual treatments will be about the same. The proposed would initially result in a small increase in annual herbicide use as sites within the current buffer zones were treated. This increase would be tempered by applying lower doses of the active ingredient found in the additional herbicides compared to those allowed now. As these and other sites outside of the buffer zones were more effectively treated due to greater timing flexibility and lower doses of active ingredient, annual herbicide usage would decrease, reducing the chance of exposure to workers and the public. Design criteria to be adopted address and mitigate the potential effects of using truck/ATV mounted sprayers and treating larger infestations without separate analysis.

INTENSITY

The intensity of effects was considered in terms of the following:

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that, on balance, the effect will be beneficial.** Consideration of the intensity of environmental effects is not biased by beneficial effects of the action.
2. **The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.** There will be no significant effects on public health and safety because the number of treatments and amount of chemical used will not significantly change from current levels. The effects of the five additional herbicides are not substantially different than the herbicide effects analyzed for the original project and generally less herbicide would be used due to greater

- efficacy. Potential adverse effects of removing buffers, using motorized spray equipment and treating areas greater than one acre are mitigated through design criteria (supplemental EA page 6).
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** There are no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area as a result of the proposed action. Design features and Best Management Practices will minimize impacts to unique and ecologically critical areas (supplemental EA page 3).
 4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. There is no known credible scientific controversy over the impacts of the proposed action. Internal and public input identified no controversial impacts in the project area (supplemental EA pages 4 and 6).
 5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The Agency has considerable experience with actions like the one proposed. The analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk (supplemental EA page 5).
 6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, because it is not a new or unique action. None of the actions are a departure from commonly used methods for controlling invasive plants and are consistent with actions already approved on the Prince William Sound Zone of the Chugach National Forest (supplemental EA page 2).
 7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** The cumulative impacts are not significant. The effects of the action are limited to the small local treatment sites and there are no other effects that would be additive to the effects of the proposed action (supplemental EA page 6)
 8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. A professional archeologist reviewed treatment methods and found no consequences from the actions (supplemental EA page 6). The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources because there are no factors in the proposed action that would lead to this result (EA page 6).
 9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.** The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened

species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species act of 1973, because the species does not occur in the project area or project implementation has been evaluated to have no effect on the species (supplemental EA page 6).

10. **Whether the action threatens to violate Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered. The action is consistent with the 2002 Chugach National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (supplemental EA page 2).

After considering the effects of the actions analyzed in terms of context and intensity, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

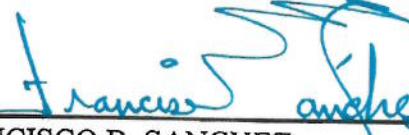
This decision is consistent with the 2002 Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan including applicable plan components. It is consistent with all other applicable laws and regulations, and its purpose is to reduce the spread of invasive species in accordance with Executive Order 13112 – Invasive Species.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (OBJECTION) AND IMPLEMENTATION DATE


Because no timely, specific written comments were received for this project during any designated opportunity for public comment, this decision is not subject to the objection process under 36 CFR 218. Implementation may begin immediately after this decision is signed.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Dan Mico, Forestry Technician, Seward Ranger District, daniel.mico@usda.gov, 907-288-7703.


FRANCISCO B. SANCHEZ
Seward District Ranger

MAY 12, 2020
Date


TIM CHARNON
Glacier District Ranger

MAY 12, 2020
Date



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